



John Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 Cedar Street Newington, Connecticut 06111

Newington Housing Needs Study Committee

SPECIAL MEETING

6:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 29, 2014

Town Hall Conference Room L-101

MINUTES

Present: Maureen Lynch; David Nagel; Terry Borjeson; Robert Serra Jr; and William Hall.

Also Present: Dianne Stone, S&DC Director; Karen Futoma, Human Services Director;
Craig Minor, Town Planner; Leslie Higgins-Biddle and Erica Moody of LISC.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The presence of the above-named individuals was noted.

II. ROLE CALL AND INTRODUCE MEMBERS

The above-listed individuals introduced themselves to the group.

III. ELECT CHAIRMAN

Terry Borjeson nominated himself for chairman, seconded by William Hall. There were no other nominations.

IV. DISCUSS PROCEDURE TO FORMULATE AND CONDUCT SURVEY OF HOUSING NEEDS

Chairman Borjeson began the business portion of the meeting by explaining the genesis of the project. It started as a Town Council discussion over the need to look into the supply of affordable senior housing in Newington, but it expanded to include the needs of all ages of Newington residents. The purpose of this committee is simply to identify the need; the Town Council will decide what to do next. The deadline to submit the results of the needs assessment is late November. Chairman Borjeson emphasized that this needs assessment has nothing to do with transit-oriented development.

a. Review sample surveys from LISC (Local Initiatives Support Corporation)

Leslie Higgins-Biddle and Erica Moody of LISC presented housing surveys that had been used in two other Connecticut towns. William Hall suggested the Committee discuss CCSU's offer to conduct the survey first, and then discuss the samples. The members agreed.

b. Review proposal from Central Connecticut State University to conduct the survey

Chairman Borjeson read out loud the proposal from Professor John Mitrano of the CCSU sociology department. Professor Mitrano teaches a course entitled, "Community Research Methods" designed to give sociology majors the opportunity to conduct real-world research on behalf of community clients. There would be a maximum of 15 students. The methodology might be surveys, focus groups, or individual in-depth interviews depending on the subject. The class begins on August 28 and ends on December 17. There would be no cost to Newington other than printing and mailing surveys and "light refreshments for focus group/interview participants". Chairman Borjeson then informed the Committee that there is a budget of ~~\$75,000~~ **\$7,500** to pay for the costs of doing the survey.

Maureen Lynch said it is a good idea, and sounds like the approach used for a Yale survey she was familiar with. David Nagel agreed. Leslie Higgins-Biddle mentioned that LISC is a non-profit organization and they do surveys too. She said that it's important to know what you want to accomplish before designing a survey questionnaire. Dianne Stone added that the Partnership for Strong Communities (PSC) also does this sort of work. She distributed copies of the PSC's 2013 Housing Data Profile for Newington and recommended that this information be discussed before finalizing a questionnaire. William Hall suggested using a focus group to help identify what we want to learn. Leslie said that this committee is that focus group. She asked if there would be multiple surveys, such as a different one for town employees? William Hall made a motion, seconded by David Nagel, to engage CCSU to do the survey. Discussion: Terry asked Leslie if she thought this was a good approach. She replied yes, so long as this committee has full oversight along the way. Bob Serra agreed, and asked if Professor Mitrano could come to the next meeting. David Nagel agreed. Chairman Borjeson said yes, Professor Mitrano would be asked to attend the next meeting.

William Hall said if they are going to do interviews, they need to interview a statistically significant number of respondents. Newington Interfaith Housing, Inc. would be very interested in the results of this survey, to help inform their actions in the future.

Dianne Stone said that if interviews are done, it should include interviews with key stakeholders to ensure input from groups that otherwise might be under-represented.

Chairman Borjeson said that people today want to "age in place", but often can't afford to in Newington. There are areas of town that are appropriate for additional housing with access to services utilized by seniors. Karen said that it's easy to identify the needs of the elderly, but there are other populations with housing needs: people who live in motels; people who essentially sleep on the couch of a friend; the homeless who literally sleep in cars and in the woods; etc. She said that if Newington had a homeless shelter, it would be filled. She said we need to know what the demand is for single room occupancy (SRO) units. Leslie agreed with the need to include key stakeholders, and said that if you want the assessment to be comprehensive, make sure the survey instrument does that. Dianne listed the Five A's of housing: affordable; appropriate, accessible, amenities, and available.

William Hall said we need to make sure the survey is not skewed toward just the housing needs of the poor and elderly. Karen said that Newington does not have any efficiency and studio apartments, and that

there is a trend in San Francisco and New York City toward tiny apartments. Newington needs transitional housing.

Dianne Stone said that the solution to Newington's housing needs is not just bricks and mortar. Zoning regulations are part of the solution, as well as tax assistance and supportive services.

Bob Serra said that any recommendations should be consistent with the Newington 2020 Plan, and must be in line with what the people want. Maureen said that having CCSU do the survey ensures impartiality.

David Nagel said that future meetings should have "public participation" on the agenda. Chairman Borjeson suggested we start doing that after the next meeting. Craig Minor said he would check the town charter to see if this is a requirement of all meetings.

Erica Moody reminded the committee that not everything needs to be achieved with this first step. Leslie said we're just laying the foundation.

Bob Serra said that Professor Mitrano needs to be familiar with the 2020 Plan, because otherwise the results will be criticized. Chairman Borjeson asked Craig Minor to distribute copies of the 2020 Plan to the committee members.

David Nagel reminded the group that our charge is just to provide information to the decision-makers. It will be up to the Town Council what to do with the results of this needs assessment.

V. SET DATE FOR NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would be on Wednesday, August 6. Bob suggested everyone look at the sample surveys and X-out the unnecessary questions. Chairman Borjeson agreed.

Dianne Stone said that Professor Mitrano should get a copy of the 2020 Plan too, and a copy of the 2013 Housing Data Profile.

VI. ADJOURN

William Hall made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Bob. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Minor, AICP
Town Planner